

Speech-To-Speech Relay Service

FCC Consumer Facts

Background

Speech-to-Speech (STS) is one form of Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS). TRS is a service that allows persons with hearing and speech disabilities to access the telephone system to place and receive telephone calls. STS enables persons with a speech disability to make telephone calls using their own voice (or an assistive voice device). Like all forms of TRS, STS uses specially trained operators – called Communications Assistants (CAs) – to relay the conversation back and forth between the person with the speech disability and the other party to the call. STS CAs are specially trained in understanding a variety of speech disorders, which enables them to repeat what the caller says in a manner that makes the caller's words clear and understandable to the called party.

Who Uses STS

Often people with speech disabilities cannot communicate by telephone because the parties they are calling cannot understand their speech. People with cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, Parkinson's disease, and those who are coping with limitations from a stroke or traumatic brain injury may have speech disabilities. People who stutter or have had a laryngectomy may also have difficulty being understood. In general, anyone with a speech disability or anyone who wishes to call someone with a speech disability can use STS.

Using STS

A special phone is not needed for STS. You simply call the relay center by dialing 711, and indicate you wish to make an STS call. You are then connected to an STS CA who will repeat your spoken words, making the spoken words clear to the other party. Persons with speech disabilities may also receive STS calls.

The calling party calls the relay center by dialing 711 or some other number and asks the CA to call the person with a speech disability.

Alternatives

Persons with speech disabilities may use a TTY to make a TRS call, but many such people have some type of physical limitation that makes typing into a text input device difficult. STS offers an alternative to a TTY or other text input device when the only other option would be not to communicate via telephone at all. Some STS providers also offer STS service for Spanish to Spanish callers.

Mandatory Minimum Standards for STS

The FCC imposes mandatory minimum standards on providers of all forms of TRS, such as ensuring user confidentiality, making service available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and answering 85 percent of calls within 10 seconds. The FCC also imposes certain additional requirements on STS providers. For example, STS CAs must remain with a call for a minimum of 15 minutes. In addition:

(More) ↑
→

(More)
→



Mandatory Minimum Standards for TRS (cont'd.)

- An STS CA may, at the request of the user, retain information from a particular call in order to facilitate the completion of consecutive calls. The user may ask the TRS CA to retain such information, or the CA may ask the user if he or she wants the CA to repeat the same information during subsequent calls. The STS CA may retain the information only for as long as it takes to complete the subsequent calls.
- STS providers must offer STS users the option to maintain at the relay center a list of names and telephone numbers that the STS user commonly calls. When the STS user requests one of these names, the CA must repeat the name and state the telephone number to the STS user. This information must be transferred to any new STS provider.

For further information on the TRS mandatory minimum standards, and other types of TRS in addition to STS, go to <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/trs.html>.

Complaints

If you have a complaint with an STS provider you may file it with the FCC by e-mail (fccinfo@fcc.gov); the Internet (www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html); telephone 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice; 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY; fax 1-866-418-0232; or mail to:

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554.

Include your name, address, a telephone number where you can be reached during the business day, and the name of the STS provider involved in your complaint. You should also provide:

- a description of the problem or the circumstances leading to your complaint, including dates and times and CA number if appropriate;
- the names and telephone numbers you were calling when you encountered problems with STS; and
- any other information that would help the FCC to process your complaint, such as if you complained directly, when, and to whom.

###

For this or any other consumer publication in an alternative format (electronic ASCII text, Braille, large print, or audio), please write or call us at the address or phone number below, or send an e-mail to FCC504@fcc.gov.

To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the Commission's electronic subscriber service, click on <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/contacts/>.

01/04/06 - cpb

This fact sheet is for consumer education purposes only and is not intended to affect any proceeding or cases involving this subject matter or related issues.

